



...CHRISTOPH BULL...

FIRST & GRAND

Walt Disney Concert Hall Organ
PREMIERE RECORDING

HOW THIS RECORD CAME ABOUT...

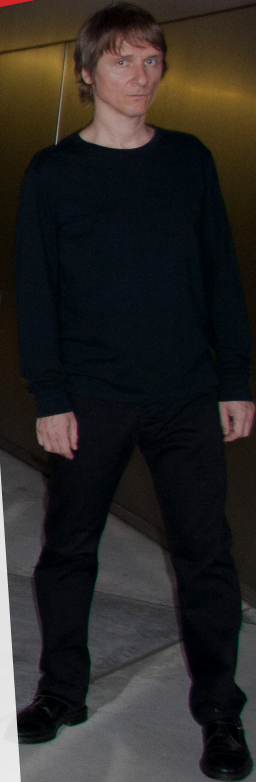
The contract to build the Walt Disney Concert Hall Organ was signed in 1999 – the same year I started my concert and album series *organica*.

The instrument is a collaboration between German-based Orgelbau Glatter-Götz (located near beautiful Lake Constance where I went with my family when I was a child), Rosales Organ Builders from Los Angeles, and the hall's architect Frank Gehry who made the innovative façade an integral part of the space. The project became a reality with the help of a generous donation from Toyota Motor Sales.

The organ's visual design stunned audiences when the hall opened in 2003, but it took another year to install, voice, and tune the instrument. One night during that year, I had visitors from Germany. On a whim I called organ builder Manuel Rosales who worked another late-night shift at the hall and he invited me over to play the work in progress. That was the first of many times I had the opportunity to play this one-of-a-kind instrument.

The first official performance on the organ was given by my former teacher Cherry Rhodes to an audience attending the national convention of the American Guild of Organists – serendipitously held in Los Angeles in 2004.

That same year, I gave my first public performance at the hall, as part of the first annual Grand Avenue Festival. Since then I've performed there numerous times – both in solo performances and in collaborations with interpretive painter Norton Wisdom, electronic musician Steve Nalepa and the Los Angeles Master Chorale.



It was while preparing for one of these performances with the Chorale in early 2009 that I decided I *had* to make an album that featured the beauty of this instrument. As I discovered, it was easier dreamed up than done – but it was not *impossible*. I secured the support of a few main backers and also of many supporters from my e-mail list (which has been growing and growing ever since those first *organica* performances in 1999) and of my people at First United Methodist Church in Santa Monica.

Kindly, I was given access to the hall for practicing in the summer of 2009 while the building was in maintenance mode. It was fun to rehearse as the workers removed and replaced chairs, enthusiastically applauding and cheering me on when I finished one of the pieces.

The recording sessions took place on August 3-4, 2009, and January 10-11, 2010. After that we went into post-production. The whole project was a labor of love, and as you can see by the pictures included with this album, I went through three distinctly different hairstyles while working on it.

I collaborated with highly esteemed recording engineers Allen Sides and Fred Vogler as well as mastering legend Bernie Grundman, using state-of-the-art equipment and technology. Sound Spot's Alejandro Leda was invaluable as engineer and production manager.

In terms of repertoire I decided that I wanted to show variety and color – the strength of the pipe organ as an instrument in general, and of this one in

particular. As in my *organica* concerts, I wanted to include top-notch traditional composers (Bach, Bruhns, Barber), classic popular art music (the Beatles masterpiece *A Day In The Life*), cinematic music (Martin Boettcher's *Winnetou-Melodie*) as well as original compositions and improvisations (*Beethoven-Improvisation* and more). The fact that the last name of all of these composers starts with a 'B' was not intentional, but I like it!

Since my own writing is influenced by rock music and cinematic scores, I wanted to make sure that my classical selections were the most rocking and cinematic I could find – Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in A minor* and Bruhns' *Prelude in E minor* representing the former, Samuel Barber's *Adagio For Strings* the latter.

Just like jazz musicians improvise on well-known standards, I decided to improvise on themes from classical composers such as Beethoven and Couperin. To that I added my original composition *A minor Trance* and my re-reading of the 14th-century work *Retrové*. For the closing piece, it was a no-brainer to tip my hat to Walt Disney with a new organ arrangement of *When You Wish Upon A Star*.

I hope you'll enjoy this album and this instrument as much as I have. Many thanks to all who made it possible.

C.B., Los Angeles, September 2010.



One of my organ teachers, Paul Jordan, turned me on to this cool early music piece, which is also known as *Organ Estampie*. It is a composition that proves that the archaic and the modern can go hand in hand. Dating back to c1325, it is the earliest extant keyboard piece, a part of the music manuscript called *Robertsbridge Codex*. It is included in the *Historical Anthology of Music* (Harvard University Press).

The music inspired me to use my songwriting and popular music sensibilities by arranging the piece in a Verse-Chorus structure (with a George-Martin-influenced initial Chorus). I also emphasized the dance character of the estampie style by adding a driving quarter-note Pedal part and by turning the occasional off-beat eighth-notes in the left hand into a consistent, techno-influenced accompaniment.

In several passages that I added or repeated minimalist-style, I felt like making good use of the organ's crescendo pedal which enabled me to employ gradual, yet vast dynamic increases as well as sudden dramatic drops like snow tumbling down from a mountain ridge.

RETROVÉ

I love the passionate intelligence, cosmic insights and Romantic visions of Bach – and I love this youthful and dynamic prelude and fugue. I included it on this album, because to me the music with its rhapsodic runs and solos says: rock!

The structure of both the prelude and the fugue enabled me to be creative with dynamic registrations. For example, during the opening sequence of the prelude I added stops every half measure with manual pistons of the Great division, whereas in the fugue I started with a single flute stop, building up to a full organ sound and using even the Llamada reeds at the very end.

The piece is from Bach's Weimar period (1708-1717) and developed out of the harpsichord *Fugue in A minor* (BWV 944, written in 1708). Its Romantic appeal is reflected by the fact that the famous Romantic composer Franz Liszt transcribed it for the piano.

PRELUDE AND FUGUE IN A MINOR BWV 543



BEETHOVEN-IMPROVISATION



Like many organ compositions, *Beethoven-Improvisation* is a piece that started out as a free improvisation. Even though the structure is pretty much set now (of course, one of the perks of being a composer-performer is making changes on the spot) I left the word “improvisation” in the title because the piece still retains an improvisatory character, and I have still left the specific notes of the opening phrases in the right hand open to the moment.

I originated *Beethoven-Improvisation* on the Gillespie Organ at Segerstrom Hall in Costa Mesa in June of 2009. I had been asked to provide an ‘Organ Postlude’ after a concert that featured Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*, and I decided to pick four of my favourite Beethoven themes and weave them together in a mini-symphony type of improvisation influenced by minimalism and cinematic rock. These themes are from *Für Elise*, *Fifth Symphony First Movement*, *Seventh Symphony Second Movement*, and *Ninth Symphony Last Movement*.

The Winnetou books by German writer Karl May continue to live on as treasures beloved by generations of Germans young and old. These adventures are set in the 19th century and are based on the friendship of German engineer Charlie (Karl), also known as Old Shatterhand, and Apache chief Winnetou, whose name the writer explained to mean “Brennendes Wasser” (“burning water”).

In the 1960s, several of May’s books were turned into very popular motion pictures, comparable to the Italian wave of Spaghetti-Westerns. A huge part of these movies’ success was the sentimental, yet beautiful music by composer Martin Böttcher. (Böttcher was born in 1927, a year before his Italian counterpart Ennio Morricone.)

I’ve had a special relationship with these movies since I grew up without a television set at home (until I eventually made my dad buy one for a soccer World Cup), so I couldn’t always watch the films which were big TV events for my friends. But gradually I did get to

see all of them in re-runs and I picked out the musical themes by ear, reproducing them on the piano.

When making the final repertoire decisions for this album, I considered a well-known meditative organ piece at this spot. However, the alternate choice was a piece intended for religious services and I thought I should use the opportunity to make a record in a concert hall as opposed to a church to include a secular cinematic composition that is *sacred* to me in that it revives heartfelt childhood memories. (As it is, I believe that any activity can and should be made sacred through our consciousness of God’s omnipresent blessings; therefore the distinction between secular and sacred has never meant much to me.)

I like how one of my friends in attendance at the recording session for *Winnetou-Melodie* described the ending of this arrangement: “It’s like water tumbling over rocks.”

WINNETOU-MELODIE



[XVII] Recit de Cornet.

35

2^e Couplet.

P.: Bourdon 8. Flûte 4.
G. O.: Cornet composé.

Cornet.

[Jeu doux]

RÉCIT DE CORNET (AFTER COUPERIN)

I've enjoyed improvising on existing compositions since my childhood – only I used to think it was not really allowed. Organists are among the few classical musicians who've practiced the art of improvisation all along. I believe that the 21st century is a good time for a renaissance of the practice in *all* classical music – no longer ceding the field to performers in Jazz and other popular music genres.

Couperin's *Récit de Cornet* inspired me to improvise because of its beautiful melody, graceful harmony and dance-like triple meter. It is part of his *Mass For The Convents* (1690) and corresponds to the Sanctus ("Holy") of the Mass.

This improvisation-turned-composition explores unusual sounds on this organ, with an emphasis on mutation stops (overtones other than octaves, such as fifths and thirds).



'LITTLE' PRELUDE IN E MINOR

This *Prelude in E minor* by Nicolaus Bruhns – a composer of the Northern German school whose music was admired by Bach – has been dubbed 'Little' because he wrote another one that's longer. However, it ain't *little* to me. Rather, I look at it as an exemplary early Baroque rocker, with its rumbling opening in the pedals which are soon to be joined by big chords in the manuals.

Similar to certain pieces by his teacher Buxtehude, Bruhns' prelude is episodic in character, allowing for opportunities to explore contrasting sounds of the organ. Several of the sections are imitative in character and tied together by improvisatory interludes.

A MINOR TRANCE

A *minor Trance* is a simple piece I've developed in improvisations on very different organs in the U.S. and in Europe, ranging from large pipe organs in concert halls to small instruments in village churches.

The piece begins with an exploration of various flute sounds on the organ, gradually adding octave stops, flowing into a contrasting B-section that employs the Strings and Chimes sounds of the organ, moving to the relative major key of C, and culminating in a crescendo of repeating chords before finishing off with a single line that's sending off a message in a Flute pipe.

You can find a list of all the stops available on this organ at www.rosales.com





ADAGIO FOR STRINGS

Samuel Barber arranged the music of his much-admired *Adagio For Strings* – used in films such as *Platoon*, *The Elephant Man*, and *Amélie* – first for string quartet, then for string orchestra, and finally for eight-part choir.

There have been various adaptations of the piece, including an electronic version by Madonna producer William Orbit (*Ray Of Light*) on his album *Pieces in a Modern Style*. The version on this record was transcribed for organ by American conductor and organist William Strickland (1914-1991).

I've long considered *A Day In The Life* at the pinnacle of Beatles compositions, because it captures the spirits of both of the song's writers, Lennon and McCartney. I enjoyed turning the contrast around somewhat by making McCartney's bridge floaty and dreamy instead of bouncy as in the original recording on the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album.

In selecting this song for an organ arrangement, I felt that the expansiveness of the Disney Hall organ lent itself to interpret the expansiveness of the composition. In the first and fourth verses I aimed to make a pipe organ sound like a Hammond organ.

I premiered my arrangement at my second Grand Avenue Festival performance in 2006. This festival is a cool recurring event in Downtown L.A. when the hall is open to the public who walk in off the street, free of charge. My collaborator, interpretive painter Norton Wisdom, created the picture you see on the following page during this live performance at Disney Hall.

A DAY IN THE LIFE



When it became clear that I would be able to make the premiere recording of this great organ, I felt inspired to pay my respects to the great man the hall is named after, Walt Disney, by creating a new arrangement of one of the most inspirational Disney songs, *When You Wish Upon A Star* from *Pinocchio* (1940). I conceived of this closing piece as an encore, like in the movies when the end credits scroll by.

When I grew up, one of my favourite books was a big volume with sturdy red binding that had pictures of all the classic animated Disney movies in it, introducing me to this wonderful body of work. So, this arrangement is a little thank-you for all those magical Disney movies I've watched since then and for the comic books based on Disney characters that I read as a little kid (and still read as a big kid).

This track features three stops donated to the Walt Disney Concert Hall Organ by Craig and Jennifer Zobelein: the Harp, Celesta, and Chimes. Craig and Jennifer attended the recording session on January 11, 2010, and as it happened the take selected as the best one was recorded right after they arrived.

For me, the music and lyrics of this song served as an inspiration to see this record through, which wasn't always easy or without obstacles. I wanted to use this project to prove to myself that I can have a will of steel, finish what I set out to do, and stick to the agreement that I made with myself: to take action and always do the best I can, however much 'the best' is at a given time. And so, I found it to be true: "When you wish upon a star . . ."

WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR



THANK YOU...

Craig and Jennifer Zobelein, Alejandro Leda, Bob L. Johnson, Ken Goldstein, Scott and Valerie Milano, Julia Lynn Ward, Manuel Rosales, Phil Smith, Chris Christel, John Vassiliou, Kevin Wapner, Tom Kolouch, John Phillips, Terry Klein, Bill Williams, James Wright, IATSE Local 33, the Walt Disney Concert Hall maintenance and security staff, the Los Angeles Music Center, Allen Sides, Fred Vogler, Bernie Grundman, Joe Bozzi, Jon Leroy, Scott Moore, Wesley Seidman, Ernie Woody, Sergey Parfenov, Ron Streicher, Alan Yoshida, Ocean Way Recording, Record One, Sound Spot, Planet Illogica, Classical Underground, Peter Malick & family, Richard Martinez, David Wheatley, David and Lesa Bergeaud, John Jones, Jimmy McKeever, Norton Wisdom, Nigel Skeet, Sebastian Leda, Tonny Sorensen, Marisa Gérardin, Whitney Moore, Destinee Handly, Wendell Pascual, Nathan Spoor, Gloria Cheng, Jim Raycroft, Bill Feightner, Chelsea Chen, Michael Barone, Bob Woolsey, Lili Haydn, Steve Nalepa, Benton-C Bainbridge, Tom Harmon, Frank Brownstead, Frederick Swann, Henry Hunt, Cathleen Crone, Eileen Jeanette, Gary Good, Jim and Barbara Smith, Michael Herberger, Winnie Leyh, Michael Ruszczynski, Meg Todd, Eric Marin, Ali Shadle, I-Chin and Scott Feinblatt, Kieran C. Illes, Peter Grant & family; all my teachers, including Ingrid Kling, Hermann Schaeffer, Renate Zimmermann, Ludwig Doerr, Samuel Swartz, Cherry Rhodes, Ladd Thomas, Paul Jordan, William Peterson, Charlie Banacos, Jon Aldrich, John Stevens, Jack Perricone, Pat Pattison, Bob Weingart; my students; my people at Berkeley, USC, ACM and UCLA; my people and choirs at Community Baptist Church Somerville, Blessed Sacrament Church Hollywood, German First United Methodist Church Glendale, Seventh-Day Adventist Church Eagle Rock, First United Methodist Church Santa Monica; all the generous people who made this record possible through their donations and pre-orders; all my friends in Germany, the U.S. and around the world; those who I forgot, and YOU.

I especially want to thank my family, starting with my dad Hermann Bull (aka The Herminator) who found me the best organ teacher in town when I started. I want to thank my mom, Ursula Bull, the rock of our family who has always given everything of herself to us. I'd also like to thank my brother and sister, Georg and Katharina, for their love and support; my brother- and sister-in-law, Heinz and Wencke; Oma Ruth, Onkel Schorsch and Tante Heidi, Tante Gertrud, my grandparents, Großmama (who provided me with my first piano – with candle holders!), as well as my six nieces and nephews for their inspiration and free-flowing love. And thanks be to God from Whom all blessings flow.

This record is dedicated with love and gratitude to my father Hermann Bull (1929-2010).